

SOCIETIES

—FOR THE—

SUPPRESSION OF VICE.

ARE THEY BENEFICIAL OR INJURIOUS? THEIR
METHODS AND TENDENCIES CONSIDERED,

BY A FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF

THE BOSTON YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

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"It is only when one's thoroughly truthful that there can be purity and freedom. Falsehood always punishes itself.—AUERBACH.

"Whatever retards a spirit of inquiry, is favorable to error; whatever promotes it, is favorable to truth."—ROBERT HALL.

"The knowledge of the human body belongs to every man, woman, and child, and has no more necessary connection with physic than with art, industry, or any of the other occupations that we do in the body and by the body."—WILKINSON.

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"For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest: neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad."—Luke viii. 17:

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"To speak his thoughts is every freeman's right,  
In peace and war, in council and in fight."

COLBY & RICH,

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## PREFATORY.

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"In the day of adversity consider," is an admonition of Ecclesiastes the preacher. It is a time of trying adversity for freemen and lovers of humanity, when the matured views and opinions of honest, intelligent, and peaceable citizens (heretics though they be), on marriage, divorce, and the social and natural relations of the sexes; and the diffusion of knowledge "generally among the body of the people," on life, love and parentage, are met and resisted by their opponents, not by further information, arguments and opinions, but by brute force, by prosecution, fines and imprisonment, instigated by agents of societies organized professedly for the suppression of vice. *Homo sum, et humani nihil a me alienum puto*. Being a man, nothing pertaining to humanity is alien to the author. The following reflections on the object and methods of Societies for the Suppression of Vice are, somewhat, to his surprise, for he had hoped for good from such societies, the results of his consideration; and with all proper deference, are courteously submitted to the further consideration of thoughtful, honest men and women specially interested in the matter discussed, and especially to all people who, with the author, believe

"There's a good time coming,  
A good time coming;  
Hateful rivalries of creed  
Shall not make their martyrs bleed  
In the good time coming.  
Religion shall be shorn of pride,  
And flourish all the stronger;  
And charity shall trim her lamp: —  
Wait a little longer."

ALFRED E. GILES.

Hyde Park, Mass., May, 1883.

*With compliments and regards of*

*ALFRED E. GILES,*

*HYDE PARK, MASS.*



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# SOCIETIES FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE.

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THEIR METHODS AND OBJECTS.

“ The vice-suppressing, starched society .  
That tribe of self-erected prigs — whose leaven  
Consists in *buckramizing* souls for heaven !  
Those stiff-necked buzzards, who evince the vigor  
Of Christian virtue, by unchristian rigor ;  
Those Quaeks and Quixotes, who in coalition  
Compose the canter's secret inquisition .  
Dolts in our tolerating constitution,  
Who turn morality to persecution,  
And through their precious pate's fanatic twists,  
Are part informers, spies” and sectarists.

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“ Why not extirpate poisonous opinions by force ? ” asks Leslie Stephen, in the April *Nineteenth Century*, and he answers, “ because I object to quack remedies.” Criminal laws, he insists, should not be called into play for outrages upon good taste, but only for directly inciting to violence. The fact that an opinion on a book or a picture, is offensive to a majority, is so far a reason for leaving it to public opinion, which in most cases is perfectly able to take care of itself ; and we are certainly not impartial or really tolerant, till we are equally anxious to punish one of the majority, for insulting or assailing the liberty of any one of the minority. Pretentious boasting, with ignorance more or less dense, of curative means and processes, characterizes the quack's method of treatment. Besides medical quacks, there are also moral quacks. There are societies formed and operated on quack principles, in their efforts to promote private and public morality. Societies for the Suppression of Vice, as usually conducted, are quack moral societies. Their name, to every thoughtful, perceiving observer, indicates their quack methods. Vice cannot be got rid of by legislative pains and penalties, any more than can fistulas, cancers, and certain other diseases, which nature brings to the surface, so that they are seen, in her efforts to throw

them off from the interior vital organs. Vices, like some diseases, come to the surface, and if their victims are properly treated, may be outgrown, healed, or otherwise eliminated; but if suppressed by external coercion, they will inevitably breed other, and probably worse corruptions, both in the individual and in society. Vice-suppressing societies make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but their inward part, like that of the Pharisees, is full of ravening and wickedness. They heal the wound of my people slightly, saying, "Peace, peace! when there is no peace."—Jer. vi, 14. In other words, they are quacks. "Vice," says a clear-sighted observer in the April *Popular Science Monthly*, "is not so much a cause as an effect; not so much a disease as a symptom. Vice does not make a nature weak or defective, but a weak and defective nature expresses its weakness and defects in vice." "Vicious inclinations," he says, "are the agents to weed out the redundant and inferior growths of mankind. To leave vicious persons to the natural results of their vices, would be far better policy for society, and more accordant with the injunction of the wise householder, to let both the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest, than to do the deeds, and to practise the methods often employed by Societies for the Suppression of Vice."

The Inquisition, that memorable and monstrous ecclesiastical organization of stupidity, deceit, and cruelty, was a heresy-suppressing society. Vice-suppressing societies, organized, conducted and supported mostly by orthodox religionists, use, to extirpate vice, methods similar to, though less severe than, those employed by the Inquisition. They advocate oppression, such as imprisonment at hard labor, and pecuniary fines.

Witness their repeated and cruel obloquies and persecutions of Ezra H. Heywood, of Princeton, Mass., formerly an earnest worker with William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker, to abolish negro slavery, and now an honest, persevering and unterrified advocate of certain delicate moral reforms, as he believes them to be. Again and again, at the risk of fortune, family, friends, health, and all the blessings of liberty, — all that makes life worth living, — has this conscientious, intelligent, loyal son of Massachusetts been attacked by the alert agent of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, and that, too, when Comstock has been aided by two or three Boston, United States attorneys, in stupid, cruel efforts to

strangle liberty, and to inaugurate in New England a reign of popular ignorance and priestly tyranny in certain departments of sociology—all under pretence of suppressing vice! “Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their minds and conscience is defiled.” — Titus i, 15. Thanks to Judge Nelson’s clear perception and exposition of constitutional law, and to the intelligence and the sound moral sense of the jury, Comstock and his attorneys in their recent effort (April, 1883), to crush Ezra H. Heywood failed, and their expected victim is a free man.

“No slave hunt in our borders, no pirate on our strand,  
No fetters in the Bay State, no slave upon our land.”

The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was incorporated May 16, 1873. During its ten years of existence, Anthony Comstock has been its secretary and agent, and has, also, during the same time been a member of the New York Young Men’s Christian Association, whose object is to improve the spiritual and mental condition of young men. If the means employed by the latter association are similar to those practised, and upheld by the Vice Society, and are adopted, and acted upon by the young men what will save them from becoming, all of them, Anthony Comstocks? Threats, deceptions, frauds, lies and oppressions, are methods of the Vice Societies. “Let not your good be evil spoken of,” is the Scripture injunction. Does Anthony Comstock, or the Society for Suppression of Vice heed it? The *New York Sun* of April 3, 1881, says “no private society, which employs detectives to investigate the morals of people, is tolerable. The men. who will consent to earn wages at such a despicable trade, must of course be mean fellows, whose reports cannot be trusted. \* \* It is a part of their business to lie.” The same paper in another issue, designates ANTHONY COMSTOCK, as “an autocratic national spy.” The *New York World* remarks of Mr. Comstock, “he shows himself so ignorant and so fanatical as to be one of the last men in the world, to be intrusted with the discretion vested in him by the Federal statute.” T. B. Wakeman, Esq., of New York, well acquainted with Comstock, says of him in a New York paper: “He tempts, and baits, and tests, and decoys, his business is falsehood, his life a crime.” Col. R. G. Ingersoll thus expresses his opinion both of Comstock and his Vice Society: “I regard Comstock as in-



famous beyond expression. I have very little respect for those men, who endeavor to put down vice, by lying, and very little respect for a society that would keep in its employ such a leprous agent." Thousands of similar opinions, in respect to Vice Societies, and their agents, and their methods have been expressed by influential papers, and by honest men and women, throughout the United States, but there is here room for no more of them. Sufficient has been shown to prove that Vice Societies and their principal agent and promoter, are evil spoken of, by honest, intelligent people.

Besides the New York Society, there is a New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, patterned after it, organized and engineered mostly by orthodox religionists, and like its parent society, often calling for funds from generous men and women to support its agents in their quack efforts to suppress vice. Its methods, inquisitional and orthodox, are those of terrorism — appeals to the apprehensions of its supporters and to the fears of its victims: "Our fears do make us traitors." Huxley says, "Orthodoxy is the Bourbon of the world of thought; it learns not, neither can it forget, though at present bewildered and afraid to move." The Inquisition employed cruelty, deceit and lying in its efforts to suppress heresy. These methods are infernal. The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice also makes use of, and attempts to justify, in the nineteenth century, in the chief city of the Union, tyranny, cruelty, deceit and lying, in its efforts to promote morality and purity. On the engraved seal of this Christian Society are two pictures: one represents, not a son of consolation visiting a stranger in prison, as approved by Jesus in Matt. xxv, 36, but a police officer with a club in one hand, thrusting a wrist-pinioned prisoner, down into a dark dungeon; the other picture represents an able-bodied young man zealously throwing a parcel of books into a flaming fire. Society has somewhat civilized within three hundred years, for the Inquisition burned both the prisoner and his books.

"Every punishment that does not arise from absolute necessity," said the great Montesquieu, "is tyrannical." "Every act of authority of one man over another, for which there is not an absolute necessity, is tyrannous," says Beccaria. He insists "that it is upon the necessity of defending the public liberty," which includes the liberty of each and every citizen, "from the usurpations of individuals, that the right to punish is founded." (*Essay on Crime*, p. 7.) Punish-

ment is itself an infliction of pain or a deprivation of liberty or of property, upon a supposed offender. It is a species of cruelty inflicted by one person upon another, and is justifiable only from the necessity of preserving the rights and liberty of citizens from invasion. Punishment is not justifiable to suppress vice, nor to promote morality. Itself is a species of vice; itself a species of immorality; yes, a species of *crime*, for it violates other persons' rights; it propagates the very evils it would eradicate. Vice develops most among slaves. Morality, that is, honest living and mutual acts of charity and helpfulness, flourishes to best advantage among freemen. Regard for the equal rights and liberties of every citizen, is the only rightful limitation on the rights and liberties of every citizen. Macaulay truly says, "The only cure for the evils of freedom, is *freedom*;" and freedom will certainly, sooner or later, eradicate vice, and bring about a purer and loftier morality than ecclesiastics or vice-suppressionists ever dreamed of. It is upon the necessity of defending liberty,—the liberty of individuals,—from the usurpations of other persons, corporations and vice-suppressing societies, that the right to punish is founded. Yet certain statutes, hastily enacted amid the hurly-burly uproar of the closing hours of Congress some few years ago, at the instance of certain would-be vice-suppressors, and commonly known from the name of their originator and artful enforcer, as the Comstock Statutes, inflict a fine of from one hundred to five thousand dollars, or imprisonment at hard labor from one to ten years, or both the fine and imprisonment, for the offence of depositing in the mail any publication of an indecent character. A far more humane, and not unlikely, an equally effective means of preventing, or nullifying the offence, would have been to enact that such publications, found in the mail, should be destroyed. "Love gives to every power a double power." But a wolfish nature is snarling and ferocious, not sweet nor charitable. When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles, he told them he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, Matt. x, 16, and when he appointed other seventy he bade them, "Go your ways; behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves." Luke x, 3. Not unlikely, from the ferocity and opposition to new truths, manifested by certain vice-suppressors, there may be now-a-days as ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, in certain churches and good societies, as there formerly were in Jewish synagogues.

The mischievous influences and quackery of Vice-Suppressing Societies are apparent, not only in the deceit, lies and trickery of their agents, but also in their efforts to prevent the increase and diffusion of very important knowledge among the people. Twice has Mr. Comstock, of the New York Society for Suppression of Vice, prosecuted Mr. E. H. Heywood, of Princeton; and once he prosecuted Mr. D. M. Bennett, editor of *The Truth Seeker*, in New York, for depositing in the mail "*Cupid's Yokes*," a pamphlet in which its author, Mr. Heywood, considers some moral and physiological phases of love and marriage, and asserts the natural right and necessity of sexual self-government. Mr. Comstock has also instituted complaints against citizens for depositing other physiological books in the mail. Dr. R. T. Trall's *Sexual Physiology*, he has attempted to suppress by his persecution. That book is a scientific and popular exposition of the fundamental problems in sociology. To its author, or rather to another book, namely: *The Hydropathic Encyclopedia*, also by Dr. Trall, do I feel that I am considerably indebted for my life at the present time. Not quite thirty years ago, I was so ill that I seemed to be almost on the borders of the grave. Certain allopathic physicians gave me to understand that my disease was consumption of the lungs; then, for the first time, I accidentally, or, rather as I now think, providentially, came across Dr. Trall's Hydropathic Encyclopedia. I read it; it inspired me with new hopes, and put me upon the study of hygiene, and proper methods for restoring my health, so that ever since I have felt grateful to Dr. R. T. Trall.

But physiological works are not the only ones that the New York Society for Suppression of Vice would stamp out, if it could. This society is largely officered by religionists, mostly of the evangelical denominations. Infidel books, works by free-thinkers are not to their taste. That they would suppress them, if they could, is evident from the Fourth Annual Report of its Board of Managers, issued in the year 1878. Therein on page 7, they express their satisfaction that "a class of publications issued by free-lovers and free-thinkers, is in a fair way of being stamped out." The attempt to stigmatize books by free-thinkers, by associating them with free-lovers, is a Comstockian trick. At the present time (May, 1883), two complaints made by Henry Chase, agent for the *New England Society for the Suppression of Vice*, against Zeus Franklin are



pending in the Municipal Court in Boston, for selling a certain physiological book on the relations of Life, Love, Marriage, Parentage, etc. Z. Franklin, its author, has for many years been a popular public lecturer on physiology, hygiene, phrenology, and mental and spiritual science. He is a philanthropist, and believes that many of the unutterable woes that have hitherto befallen multitudes of young men and maidens, have arisen from their ignorance in respect to the proper care and functions of the reproductive organs of the human constitution. It does not satisfy him, that the professors and students of medical colleges, should monopolize such important knowledge. He would popularize it, so as to save the people from sexual and hygienic sins, miseries and diseases. In spreading abroad such knowledge, is he not in accordance with section 11 of chapter V of the Second part of the Constitution of Massachusetts? Therein it is expressly recognized that wisdom and *knowledge* and virtue, *diffused generally among the body of the people*, are necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties. To this patriotic and holy end, *knowledge*—so the Constitution declares—is necessary. No department of *knowledge* is excluded, and there is certainly none more important than that of the human constitution. The Delphic oracle injunction, *Know thyself*, so all important and valuable was it believed to be among the Greeks and Romans, that it was said *e celo descendit*, to have descended from heaven. It was not the purpose, nor design of the Massachusetts Bill of Rights to shut up within college halls, medical schools, and theological seminaries, any department of knowledge, nor to limit medical, or other knowledge for the profit, honor or private interest of any one man, family or class of men. Such limitation is expressly prohibited in article VII of the First part of the Constitution which declares, “Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity and happiness of the people; and not for the *profit, honor or private interest of any one man, family or class of men.*” As before stated, it declares “knowledge,” “diffused generally among the body of the people,” “to be necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties.”

“And I doubt not thro’ the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widen’d with the process of the suns.”

That the proper knowledge of the sexual organs, is not to be tabooed, nor legally prohibited by vice societies or other



pretentious quacks and ignoramuses, is evident, also, from the remarks of Judge Lowell in the United States District Court in Boston, some two or three years ago, when Comstock complained of a Mr. Jones for depositing in the mail an *Illustrated Marriage Guide*, a treatise on the sex organs. Judge Lowell after examining the book said that "it treated certain subjects supposed to be unknown, and not supposed to be known, and which he thought ought to be taught in school, and that he did not see anything at all indecent in the book."

"Ignorance is the curse of God,  
Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven."

—Henry VI. Part 2.

Besides restraining the increase and diffusion of most important knowledge, the evil effects and quackery of vice-suppressing societies are seen not only in the deceit, trickery and lying practised by their agents, but in the depreciation of truth and perfect integrity (which is the very life and essence of all genuine virtue and morality), and in the justification by teachers of religion, and doctors of divinity, of deceit, deception, and lying as practised by the agents of such societies.

At a public meeting of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, January 16, 1880, Rev. Howard Crosby, is reported in the papers of the following day, as having there said, in his speech, "I believe in deceit," and as having otherwise supported Comstock's methods. In *The Independent*, of September 21, 1882, it appears that, the Rev. J. M. Buckley, D. D., LL. D., a Methodist, said at Chautauqua, that Anthony Comstock was right in employing falsehood and deception in the detection of crimes. In his letter in the same *Independent*, the Rev. Dr. Buckley, himself writes: "Deception to the extent of purposely misleading action—the use of decoy letters for the detection of mail and money-drawer robbers, counterfeiters, etc., I believe to be right." His principle appears to be, that all lying which has a good object in view, is justifiable, a doctrine which the Apostle Paul, in Romans iii. 8, indignantly disavows, intimating that the damnation of those who practised it was just. Though the Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby believes in "deceit," and the Rev. Dr. Buckley believes "deception" to a certain extent "to be right," yet many honest New England people abhor such methods

of suppressing vice, and believe, with the Proverb writer of the Old Testament, that the end of such ways, "are the ways of death." Let candid people, who would know somewhat of the ways that are dark, and the tricks that are potent, practised by vice-suppressing societies, read the records of their doings in their Reports. The 25-cent pamphlet entitled "Anthony Comstock, his Career of cruelty," etc., published at the office of *The Truth Seeker*, 21 Clinton Place, New York, also purports to give information of his ways and methods as agent of the New York Society, tricks, deviltries, and methods, which, if truly reported, will consign his name to infamy. Many good citizens now believe that the disfranchisement of such societies, and the removal of Comstock from any and every government office that he holds, would be a gain for public, and individual honesty and morality.\*

Noxious are these "deceit" and "deception" vapors emitted by Christian doctors of divinity and vice-suppressing quacks. *Ex oriente lux*. Let eastern light shine with healing in its rays. "Be free from duplicity and stand firm in the path of truth," says Kreesna to Arjoon in the second chapter of the *Bhagvat Geeta*. "There is no religion higher than truth," is the motto of the Maharajah family of Benares. "Truth will lead to every virtue; purity of mind comes by truthfulness," is another Hindoo maxim.

"Thou shalt abstain from deceiving others, by word or deed. Thou shalt speak no word that is false," is a Buddhist commandment. "Wisdom never lies," says Pallas to Telemachus in the *Odyssey*. "To speak the truth, and perform good offices, are two things that resemble God." "Every man ought to speak, and act with such perfect integrity that no man could have reason to doubt his simple word," was the precept for truthfulness taught by Pytha-

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\*Grotesque and monstrous were certain forms of animal life on earth in long past geologic ages. Certainly not less grotesque and hideous, to our wiser and more charitable descendants, will appear certain manifestations of existent church morality. Are doctors of divinity and church members, who justify deceit, practise deception, inflict barbarous imprisonment and enormous fines on authors and vendors of books, and treatises on Love, Marriage, and Parentage, than which there are scarcely any subjects more important for men and women to have knowledge of, any less "fools and blind guides" (so Jesus called them) than those who formerly strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel? Nowhere in either the Old or the New Testament do we read that men are called upon to "suppress vice." On the contrary, Jehovah requireth naught of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."—Micah vi, 8. Hypocrisy is the synonyme of Phariseism in some dictionaries. Not unlikely in future editions "vice-suppressionists" may be the equivalent of Pecksniffs, liars and deceivers.

goras. Not less free from Comstockian guile and vice-suppressors' notions of truth and honesty, are the sentiments of certain modern free-thinkers. Prof. Huxley said of Darwin, that "the love of truth was the passion of his noble nature." John Stuart Mill's step-daughter, Miss Helen Taylor, said, "that no conceivable circumstances could override the obligations to veracity." Marian Evans writes, "The power of seeing and reporting truly is a form of health that has to be delicately guarded;" and as an ancient Rabbi has solemnly said, the "penalty of untruth is untruth."

To many honest, simple-minded men, it is a matter of inexplicable surprise that evangelical ministers, professing as they do great reverence for the Bible, overlook or otherwise disregard its teachings on essential morality, after becoming members of vice societies. What Christian other than a vice-suppressionist would slight the following passages in its holy pages: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight."—Psalm ci, 7. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled, and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee."—Isaiah xxxiii, 1. "Oh deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man."—Psalm xliii, 1. "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue to deceit."—Psalm lv, 19. "A deceitful witness speaketh lies."—Prov. xiv, 25. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire."—Rev. xx, 10. The chicanery of clerical vice-suppressors to gloze with soft words the untruths of their agents, would not deceive him who wrote:

"Whose tongue soe'er speaks false,  
Not truly speaks; who speaks not truly lies."

King John, Act iv. Sec. 3.

Lying is a vice, but not to be suppressed by statute. Thanks to Providence some clergymen are not so easily hoodwinked as others are, by pretentious morality and specious quackery. Rev. Sydney Smith, referring to a London Vice Society, said, "It is hardly possible that a society for the suppression of vice can ever be kept within the bounds of good sense and moderation. \* \* The loudest and noisiest suppressors will always carry it against the more prudent part of the community; the most violent will be considered as the most moral, and those who see the absurdity will, from the fear of being thought to encourage vice, be reluctant to oppose it. \* \* Men whose trade is

rat-catching love to catch rats; the bug-destroyer seizes on his bug with delight; and the suppressor is gratified by finding his vice. \* \* So much fraud and deception are necessary for carrying on his trade — it is so odious — that no man of respectability will ever undertake it." A brave, but prudent New York Baptist minister, Rev. Dr. W., offered, in 1880, a protest in the public prints against such societies. We have space for only a few of his words: "I have frequently denounced to my clerical brethren the anti-vice movement, as at present it appears. The fact is, a sort of moral cowardice has overcome and paralyzed many who fear to be unpopular, and hence speak not their minds. I oppose the jesuitism of this anti-vice movement, for the effort is made to dragoon the whole church into supporting a system of lying espionage. The effort is made to get the money of the benevolent, to support a band of oppressive spies. \* \* While making laws regulating the mail so as to prevent wicked persons from appealing to the cupidity, or weakness of the wicked, and so luring them to their ruin by fraudulent schemes, I want the law so to read that 'Comstock & Co.' cannot, by making a like appeal to the cupidity of the wicked, lure them to their ruin. \* \* Again, no need to have a young man and his fanatical associates undertaking to say to respectable families and their physicians: 'You have no right to think for yourselves in the matters of the most sacred bodily concern; it is obscenity in the family to have to do with these things.' \* \* The time has come for protest."—A NEW YORK PASTOR.

If orthodox doctors of divinity and evangelical vice-suppressors were immersed in the spirit of truthfulness, the impurity which they now believe to be in "Cupid's Yokes," Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," and physiological treatises on Love, Marriage and Heredity, would be cleansed from the lenses of their eyes: for to speak truth is to talk in God's own tongue, and it renovates and purifies a person's whole being. No fraternity with these Christian doctors of divinity, who believe in deceit, and that deception is right to a certain extent, could Homer's truthful hero have had.—he who said,

"Who dares think one thing and another tell,  
My heart detests him as the gates of hell."

Is it only among pagans that the doctrine is taught of perfect unswerving allegiance to truth? Is there no American moralist whose soul is far above fiends that would palter with



us in a double sense, any one whose perceptions are clear enough to teach that death is preferable to a lie? Yes! Thanks to the Giver of all good for Ralph Waldo Emerson. He was in his early life a Christian minister, but ever living true to his highest perceptions of right, he put off both the ministerial robe and the Christian name, and crystallized his thought in the simple stanza—

“Though love repine and reason chafe,  
There came a voice without deny,  
'Tis man's perdition to be safe,  
When for the truth he ought to die.”

It is a Persian maxim that to him whose feet are shod with leather, walking feels the same as if the whole earth were covered with leather, for wherever he goes he treads on leather. So it seems to me that a pure soul, and it must be an educated one, is clad in purity, and is above all consciousness of impurity. Ignorance darkens the soul, prejudice distorts it. Ignorance and prejudice combined will breed in the minds of their victims

“Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire.”

Hence it happened that Socrates, the wisest of the Greeks, was accused in his seventieth year, of teaching impiety, and of corrupting the youth. Yet in truth the knowledge which all his life he sought to acquire and to impart to others, was the “Know thyself” of the Delphic oracle. This knowledge was too wonderful for his accusers, as it appears now-a-days to be for vice-suppressionists; it is high, they cannot attain unto it. The impiety and corruption charged upon Socrates, was not in him, but in the ignorant, prejudiced minds of his accusers. So also in a subsequent age, in another nation, treason and blasphemy were charged by elders, chief priests, scribes and zealous religionists upon the Man of Galilee. Their narrow and bigoted minds perverted his divine teachings. They said his words were blasphemy; but the blasphemy was not in his words, but in their thoughts, and misapprehensions. His words simply stirred up and revealed to themselves the errors and blasphemy of their own thoughts, which errors and blasphemy, they mistakenly attributed to Jesus.

As blasphemy so called, may arise in persons' minds, from their ignorance or miseducation in respect to the person or object supposed to be blasphemed, so may obscene thoughts

arise in ignorant, or perversely instructed minds, from their deficiency of knowledge in respect to the normal use, or manifestations of amativeness. As the diplomated chief priests and religious teachers of eighteen hundred years ago, professing themselves to be wise, changed the pure religion and simple truths spoken by Jesus, into blasphemy, so the manifestations of love, whether expressed in forms of art, in scientific treatises, in classics, poems, or other literary works, are apt to awaken only obscene and lewd thoughts and images in the minds of vice-suppressors. Yet they occupy respectable, sometimes conspicuous and honored positions in modern society. It is not for me to remind them, for they will probably themselves think of Jesus' comparison of certain ancient respectables, to whited sepulchres, beautiful outwardly, but within full of all uncleanness. Yet knowledge will cleanse the soul of this uncleanness; but strange is it, that against the books, works of art, and other means of imparting the appropriate knowledge, the vice-suppressors wage bitter war. "Woe unto them," said the prophet, "that put darkness for light, and light for darkness."—Isaiah v, 20.

Whoever cannot look on unadorned representations of the human form divine, in works of science or of art, without consciousness of obscene or lewd thoughts, proves his ignorance, miseducation or the impurity of his own heart, from which proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, false witness and blasphemies, and verifies the words of Jesus that he has committed adultery in his heart.

"Give to me the flower" (so Swedenborg relates), said an inhabitant of a dark sphere to an angel. The angel gave to him the flower, but, as he took it, the flower became a scorpion. "It was a flower," said the angel in explanation, "but your thoughts, as you received it, changed it to a scorpion." So the obscenity charged by Vice-Suppressionists, as being in "Cupid's Yokes," and in books on Love, Life, Marriage and Parentage, are not in the books, but in their own darkened, prejudiced, perverted imaginations and thoughts, to whom now-a-days, more than to agents and officers of Vice-Suppressing Societies, are applicable the words of Jesus: "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."—Matt. xxiii, 26.

A clean-minded, educated person sees more clearly the purpose and meaning of treatises on Love, Marriage,

Parentage, etc., than does a Vice-suppressionist. He sees something more than men as trees walking. His mental atmosphere is not black with ignorance and prejudice. He sees in *Cupid's Yokes* and books on Life, Love, Marriage and Parentage, in respect to which he has knowledge, the thoughts of their authors, not any impure reflections of his own thoughts. He may also see in the streets, victims of vice, of ignorance, of excess, of misdirection and misfortune. Towards such unfortunates, his sympathy, charity and assistance go out. He does not burden them with fines and imprisonment, nor otherwise make their life grievous to them. But he seeks to instruct them, and legally restrains their liberty, only so far as may be necessary to protect the rightful liberty of other persons.

To an ignorant person, or to a backward-looking son of time, every forward step in science, stirs up his prejudices, and in the mists and shadows of his ignorance, he experiences a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and is eager to assist the powers that be, in devouring his adversaries. Truly does Huxley say, that "extinguished theologians" (he might also have truly added, vice-suppressionists) "lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes besides that of Hercules."

Certain vice-suppressionists, especially their agents, do not expect to trust entirely to their virtue or to the contributions of generous friends for their support and livelihood. Their purpose is to wage war, and they hope to forage on the enemy. Hence in certain of the States, Comstockian Statutes partially provide for them. For instance in Massachusetts, section 16, chapter 207 of the Public Statutes provides that one-half of the fine paid by an offender for selling indecent literature, shall be paid to the informer and prosecutor. So far the agents of the Vice-Suppressing Societies have not publicly reported the amount of their perquisites. Section Seven of the act of incorporation of the New York Society for Suppression of Vice, provides that one-half of the fines collected through its instrumentality, shall accrue to its benefit. That, with salaries, informers' snacks, and hush-money extorted from victims under threats of exposure, may make an agent quite rich, if he remain long in office. But ought not informers to be well paid? They run a risk. People will not always endure them. Suetonius mentions, among the calamities in Rome in the time of Titus —

"Were informers and those who employed them; a tribe of miscreants who had grown up under the license of former reigns. These, Titus ordered to be lashed and well cudgelled in the forum, and then, after he had obliged them to pass through the amphitheatre, as a public spectacle, commanded them to be sold as slaves, or else banished to some rocky island."

May the day be far distant when Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby and Rev. Dr. J. M. Buckley and Anthony Comstock shall suffer such tribulation on Boston Common, New York Battery or Central Park. It was not of Anthony Comstock, but of another informer, that Curran the Irish orator said:

"To credit a vile informer, the perjurer of a hundred oaths, a wretch whom pride, honor or religion could not bind. He measures his value by the coffins of his victims, and in the field of evidence, appreciates his fame as the Indian warrior does in fight, by the number of scalps with which he can swell his triumph. He calls on you by the solemn league of eternal justice, to audit the purity of a conscience washed in his own atrocities. . . . Whether his soul shall go to heaven or to hell, he seems altogether indifferent; for he tells you he has established an interest in each."

In March, 1770, in Massachusetts on Cape Ann, a number of the inhabitants took Jesse Savill, an informer, from his bed, and after having carted him naked, holding a lighted lantern, around the town, so that every one might see him, bestowed a handsome coat of tar upon him, and placed him on the town pump, and caused him to swear nevermore to inform against any person, and to give thanks for the gentle treatment he had received. It is to be hoped that neither the agent of the New England Society for Suppression of Vice, nor the cunning, deceitful, crafty agent of the New York Society may ever be subjected to such primitive justice. Yet the Scriptures caution: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—Gal. vi, 7.

Vice-Suppression Societies are quackeries, nuisances and mischief-makers. They are, unintentionally, on the part of their supporters, nurseries of false morality, of hypocrisy and deceit. They do enormously more evil than good. They terrorize, or demoralize and inhumanize, wherever their influence is felt. Let them cease their villanous methods of cruelty, deceit, deception and lying. Let them disband, and their members learn and practise scientific truth and New Testament morality. Let them prefer knowledge on sexual matters to ignorance, truth to lying, honesty to deceit, and benevolence to cruelty.



From the last Report (1883) of the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, may be gained some inklings, mere hints of the less offensive methods practised by Vice Societies, in carrying on their work. The Society is young, and has not yet attained the age, revenues, monstrosity, nor adroitness in outrageous and execrable modes of procedures, of its New York prototype, as detailed in the book, "Anthony Comstock, his Career of Crime and Cruelty," herein previously alluded to. That Christians, church members, ministers and doctors of divinity should be conscious of no dishonor, of no feeling of meanness in practising or approving the deceits, deceptions, artifices, inveiglements and other contrivances of fraud and falsehood usually employed by agents of Vice Societies, is a psychological problem to be solved by purer and honester Christians than are the members of such societies, or else by wiser and better beings than Christians. The Rev. Secretary of the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, reports, that "our agent has watched with unremitting scrutiny the shop windows;" that "low theatres and other places of entertainment are constantly under the scrutiny of our agent;" that "very many test-letters have been written in reply to suspicious advertisements;" that "our agent has personally inspected several suspicious printing establishments *incognito*;" that "our agent has personally called upon certain dealers with reference to a "particular book of an indecent character offered by them" — probably Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, which could no more be appreciated by smutty-minded people, than pearls by swine. "I am so glad that your Dictionary has no nasty words in it," said a withered old maid to Dr. Johnson at its first publication. "Ah! so you have been looking for them," answered the doctor. On matters no less unsavory has the mind of the agent of the N. E. Vice-Suppressing Society for the last year been engaged, as appears by its report. He has been looking for them. What a preparation of soul for the future life!

"The tissue of the Life to be  
We weave with colors all our own,  
And in the field of Destiny  
We reap as we have sown.

Still shall the soul around it call  
The shadows which it gathered here,  
And painted on the eternal wall  
The Past shall reappear."

The mistrusts, the squint suspicions, the anxious peerings for evil, the plottings to entrap the evil doer, these thoughts that daily fill this vice-suppressing agent's mind—what inducements, earthly or heavenly, could influence an honest man to admit them into the sanctuary of his soul, or to risk the reappearance of their hideous images, to his mental vision hereafter, as the panorama of his earthly life unrolls before him? "He that is unjust let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy let him be filthy still," was the angelic fiat.

The Rev. Secretary of the Vice Society further reports—that the advertising of a "lottery office was promptly stopped by us. We wish we could report equal success with regard to the advertisements of so-called Clairvoyants."

Clairvoyants are clear-seers, and can often see the thoughts and intents of the heart. No wonder, therefore, that vice-suppressors attempt to suppress them, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved."—John iii, 20. And as a rule it has been remarked that "the *monchard* (spy) is often as great a rascal as the criminal he is hunting." In 1825 the suspicion that Vidocq was himself the originator of many of the burglaries he was so successful in ferreting out, became so strong in France, that he was dismissed from the police force.

The report continues: "We have just secured the arrest (March 21) of a miscreant who has been printing and selling a vile book in our city." The alleged miscreant is Mr. Franklin, herein before mentioned, and the alleged "vile book" is his "Illustrated Medical Counsellor," a useful, instructive and moral book, requiring for its composition, very considerable acquaintance with anatomy and physiology, and a more than ordinary knowledge of the laws of heredity and the human temperaments. It is valuable to young parents, whose means do not permit them to obtain larger and more expensive works, treating of the same subjects. It is a book emanating from a good head and a kind heart, and one of which, doubtless, many intelligent, pure-minded people would a thousand times prefer to have been the author, than of the last report of the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice. Mr. Franklin, wiser by his experience, will probably hereafter heed the scriptural injunction, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you," a direction whose meaning, if applicable

to himself, appears to be, that he is not to give or to sell illustrated books of human physiology, to vice-suppressors for their instruction, lest they spurn them and turn again and prosecute him.

Not a vice-suppressor, but a spiritual reformer, an apostle of Jesus Christ was he, who, surprised at their stupidity, cried out to certain ignoramuses of his day, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" 1 Cor. vi. 19. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God," and that "the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are?"—1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. What suitable appreciation of that holy temple can sectarists have, who regard pictorial illustrations of its anatomy and physiology as obscene, who stigmatize as "vile," books which impart information in respect to its structure, uses and preservation, and who seek to oppress with pains and penalties, and designate as "miscreant," honest men and women who diffuse "knowledge" of it, "generally among the body of the people"? Are such sectarists paragons of purity, or are they quacks and ignoramuses?

The New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, in one of its appeals for money, says, that its agent "will give attention to stores where immodest photographs are exposed for sale, and promises to do all in its power to silently remove every temptation to impurity and vice to which its notice is called." While giving attention to these matters, it would be well for the Society and its agent to consider whether they are qualified to pass judgment upon them. They, and persons like-minded with them, have complained of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and of nude pictures and engravings of the human form, as being immodest and obscene. Perhaps the immodesty and obscenity are in their minds, not in the book nor the picture. The impure ear pollutes the purest speech. The obscene soul sees nothing but obscenity in the *Venus de Medici*,\* the *Apollo Belvedere*, in the nude figures of art galleries, schools of design, and in treatises and pictures of human physiology. Yes,

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\*The first plaster cast of the "*Venus de Medici*" ever seen in the United States was brought to Pennsylvania in the latter part of the last century by R. E. Pine, an English portrait and historical painter; but the nudity of the statue gave such offence to the women of Philadelphia that Pine was forced to exhibit it to his friends in private. Almost a quarter of a century later, when some fifty casts of famous statues belonging to the Louvre Gallery were shown at the exposition of the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, the managers were compelled to set apart one day in each week for women, and on such days to keep the naked figures carefully covered up.

the obscenity complained of may be inside not outside of themselves. "Is that picture indecent?" asked Boswell, pointing to an engraving of a naked woman. "No, sir," replied Dr. Johnson, "but your question is." A Presbyterian lady censured as nasty, one of Miss Lewis's nude statues. "Madam, your mind is nastier than my statue," was Miss Lewis's answer.

"Thoughts impure  
May pass through mind of angel, or of man,  
And leave no stain."

It is the mind, as Whittier says, that really sees, shapes, and colors all things. "Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled."—Titus i, 15. To philosophers, physicians, physiologists, artists, liberals and perceiving people, nude pictures suggest no impurity, because their minds are not impure. Knowledge has cleansed their souls. The Comstockian criterion of sexual purity, viz., sexual ignorance—misnamed innocence, is an erroneous, a false standard. A misleading beacon light, it has betrayed and wrecked countless multitudes of honest men and women, of confiding youths and maidens, and been a hideous and cruel obstruction to the development of sexual science. Lewis L. Delafield, Esq., in his remarks January 30, 1883, before the New York Society for Suppression of Vice, suggested that "proper instruction, properly given by the right person at the right time, would remove most of the danger resulting from ignorance and inflamed imaginations in respect to these delicate matters." In respect to it, he said that "very false notions exist—notions founded on good intention, and backed by modesty—often false modesty. The subject is extremely delicate, and must be delicately handled; but depend upon it, that honesty and truth are always right, and that there is nothing wrong in the natural craving which God implanted in us, under control of reason and conscience, and which He pronounced very good."

Theodore Parker said to the Calvinist who sought his conversion, "Your God is my devil." Equally true is it that Comstockian purity, unfortunately for themselves, accepted as genuine internal purity of soul, by Christian Young Men's Associations and Vice-Suppressing Societies, is the sheerest quackery, offensive and nauseous to gentle, intelligent and pure-minded people. Less meddlesome and hypocritical, more



truthful, peaceful and happy would human society be, if the virile potencies of God and Nature were better known and more religiously appreciated.

One of Ariosto's apologues used by Macaulay in his essay on Milton, and especially applicable at the present time when the Comstockian glamor distorts the vision of many excellent and Christian people from the principle of truth in the Church, and of liberty in the State, is

Of a fairy, who by some mysterious law of her nature was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who in spite of her loathsome aspect pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love, victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful serpent. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory. There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces—and that cure is *freedom*!"

In other words experience is the best of all teachers. It is on the principle of LIBERTY or *freedom* for every man to do all that he wills without infringing on the equal right of any other man, that the state and national constitution of each and all of the United States are founded. It is the American ideal of civil government. It is this principle of *Freedom* to do whatever a person wishes to do, limited only by the principle of justice, viz., regard for the corresponding freedom of other people that differentiates the American ideal of government from the ideals out of which developed Asiatic and European governments. To this principle, every intelligent American who can perceive celestial beauty even when disguised, will trust, even in the dark hours when Comstockian storms darken, thunder and sulphurize the air, as patient Job trusted in his Redeemer. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Through just liberty, through their experiences (if not crushed by Comstockian statutes, which insidiously work a thousand times more harm than good) will all men certainly and finally come into the way of wisdom, morality and uprightness.

The promise of the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice "to do all in its power to silently remove every temptation to impurity and vice to which its notice is called,"

is another illustration of quack methods of promoting morality. Purity and virtue can be born and developed only from and through liberty and knowledge—from opportunity to know, and to choose either the right or the wrong (otherwise it is not liberty). Yes! from and through temptation.

The fourth chapter of Matthew relates, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted* of the devil." Comstock says that his entrapping letters are not decoys, but are "tests." Perhaps future orthodox revisers may adopt the suggestion, so that the verse shall read, "be tested of the devil." It is not for us to point out every resemblance between the ancient and the modern tempter or "tester" if that word be preferred. Temptations are to be resisted, to be conquered; not removed as vice-suppressors advise and work for. The evils of liberty will work their own cure; for through experience comes knowledge; knowledge of the folly of vice, and the excellence of virtue; and then sooner or later will virtue be preferred. What becomes of young people brought up, removed from every temptation, as recommended by the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice? Thousands of cases of their moral shipwreck might be told; but a short note by Dr. Thomas Inman on page 602 of vol. 2 of his "Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names," epitomizes a sufficient answer. Dr. Inman, brother of the Inman whose name designates an English line of ocean steamships, was for many years physician to the Royal Infirmary in Liverpool, and lectured successively on botany, medical jurisprudence, materia medica, therapeutics, etc., in the School of Medicine in that city, and was president of its Literary and Philosophical Society. He had a wide field of observation, and valuable is his testimony.

"I have often heard it alleged that the wildest, and apparently the most depraved of our educated young men, are those who have been brought up the most strictly by their parents or others, in a religious point of view. My own observations fully bear out the general idea. The mind of such has been overloaded with imaginary terrors which inundate the thoughts, when the intellectual has once succumbed to the animal being, and moral drunkenness is resorted to, that thought may be drowned. If pious fathers studied sound sense as well as religion, they would have fewer profligate sons. I know many bad men, but few are more utterly vile than the offspring of certain ministers of religion. The worst youth I ever knew familiarly, could to my knowledge trace his vileness to the puritanic strictness of a conscientious but narrow-minded father."

This view appears to be corroborated in the last Report (the ninth) of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, which, on page 6, alludes to "most shocking matter" (it probably did not shock Comstock, than whom probably no one living is more familiar with such matter), which Comstock had traced "to a young lad in Wall Street, New York city, *the son of a clergyman*. This youth, about twenty-one years of age, at first denied having any such matter at all. The agent then demanded what he had in his pockets, when, becoming frightened, he handed out twenty varieties."

Short-sighted and poor managers would they be, who should advocate filling up the canals and rivers of a country, as a precaution against youths and children being drowned in them. The preventive would be a greater calamity than the danger to children. Knowledge of the art of swimming, would be a more useful and less expensive protection. Amative principles for good and wise purposes are inherent in human nature. To attempt to ignore them in youth, or unwisely to repress or suppress them, is folly. Nature works. Suppression necessitates perversion or distortion. Secret vice, vile affections, unnatural lusts, unseemly and nameless obscenities were engendered in monasteries, nunneries, and other places where coercion and modern vice-suppressing methods (the new is old, the old is new) were adopted to repress the natural instincts. Let them be regulated by the instructed inward monitor; not suppressed by legislative pains, penalties and other quackeries. The proper function of government is to preserve the rights of citizens against invasion; not to promote morals or religion. These flourish best free from legislative interference.

"Rather bear the ills we have,  
Than fly to others we know not of."

True wisdom, productive of genuine morality, is Terence's maxim, *Nosse omnia hæc salus est adolescentulis*, that youth derives its safety from knowledge.

Spartan young men and women, than whom never were youth trained more thoroughly and effectively to control their appetites, acquired their temperance and self-government, not through ignorance (often by vice-suppressors mistaken for innocence) but by knowledge of the evils of excess. They witnessed again and again, until knowledge became repletion, the indecent dances, the drunken revelries, and other debaucheries of the Helots. Thus they were

armed with knowledge, and knowledge made them virtuous. Ignorance is the quack method advocated, and as far as possible, enforced by Societies for the Suppression of Vice.

In the organization of the New England Society for the Suppression of Vice, are enrolled the names of many excellent men. Office, except the paying one of agent, in such a Society is not desirable; it is unsavory. Probably neither its gentlemanly and accomplished president, nor the learned vice-presidents, have permitted the use of their names, except from feeling that they were more or less guardians of the morals of youth. Probably none of them would care to stand alone in their respective positions; but union is strength and each one shares in the good name and honors of his associates. But when they learn the base uses to which this, and other Vice Societies are sometimes put: viz., to shut out knowledge, to hinder investigations in Social Science, to promote deceit, deception, cruelty, lying and other frauds, doubtless they will not desire re-election. In time all Vice Societies will die, but the records of their infamies will survive.

From their avowed practices and justification of deceit and deception; from their ignorance of honest dealing with human beings, in respect to the reproductive parts of their nature; from their advocacy and enforcement of severe legal pains and penalties upon unfortunate and uneducated offenders, whose offences are the effects, rather of their ignorance, than of criminal purposes; from their evil results; from the opinions and observations of many wise and good men, we are constrained to believe that Societies for the Suppression of Vice, as now conducted, are unworthy of public confidence.

“ My work is finished; I am strong  
 In faith and hope and charity;  
 For I have written the things I see,  
 The things that have been and shall be.  
 Conscious of right, nor fearing wrong,  
 Because I am in love with Love,  
 And the sole thing I hate is Hate;  
 For Hate is death; and Love is life,  
 A peace, a splendor from above;  
 And Hate a never-ending strife,  
 A smoke, a blackness from the abyss  
 Where unclean serpents coil and hiss!  
 Love is the Holy Ghost within,  
 Hate is the unpardonable sin!  
 Who preaches otherwise than this  
 Betrays his master with a kiss.”



# APPENDIX.

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*Extracts from an Address delivered in Boston,  
March 30, 1879.*

BY ELIZUR WRIGHT.

FELLOW CITIZENS :—

It is becoming to submit to necessary evils with fortitude and equanimity. One of these evils is that of protecting society from criminals by pains and penalties. Every day is saddened by many cases of this necessity, which should stimulate every one who loves his race, in all kindness and charity to attract mankind away from crime and open all possible avenues leading in an opposite direction. But punishing the innocent is not a necessary evil, and we are not called upon to view it with any complacency or forbearance. On the contrary, wherever it takes place without kindling public indignation, there society is on the downward road to perdition, or has arrived at it. It is a sad omen for the second century of our Republic, to see our courts straining at gnats and swallowing camels,—punishing honest authors and booksellers on pretence of obscenity, and neglecting to punish for enormous bribery and breach of trust the heads of powerful corporations, secular and ecclesiastic. There never was a louder call for popular indignation than in the case of this prosecution of D. M. Bennett for “depositing *Cupid’s Yokes* in the United States mail.” Congress violates the Constitution by assuming power to legislate at all on the morals or moral tendency of matter offered to the mails. The Supreme Court commits a still more dangerous outrage by pronouncing it constitutional. Judge Benedict administers the *coup de grace* to the liberty of the press when he instructs a jury that any book, without regard to its general scope or intent, is unmailable, when any passage or expression in it is obscene, lewd, or indecent, by the following tests: “The *test of obscenity* is whether the *tendency* of the matter is to deprave and corrupt the morals of those whose minds are *open* to such influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort *may* fall. *Lewd* means a *tendency* to excite lustful thoughts. Passages are *indecent* within the meaning of the statute if they contain obscenity; that is to say, matter having *that form* of indecency which is *calculated* to promote the general corruption of morals.”

Here is individual liberty, freedom of thought, speech, and printing completely overthrown. Our own Bill of Rights, I mean that of Massachusetts, asserts, Art. IV—

“The people of this Commonwealth have the sole and exclusive right of governing themselves, as a free, sovereign and independent State, and do, and forever hereafter shall, exercise and enjoy every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not, or may not hereafter be, by them expressly delegated to the United States of America, in Congress assembled.”

Now, neither Massachusetts nor New York has ever delegated to Congress the power to punish a citizen of either for the immoral “tendency” of words put into the mail. Again, Art. XII. of our Bill of Rights asserts: “No subject shall be held to answer for any crime or offence until the same is fully and plainly, substantially and formally described to him.” Here a law which defines nothing is interpreted by “tendency,” a term still more indefinite.

Our Bill of Rights says, Art. XVI,—and the Constitution of the United States also says as much.—“The liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom in a State; it ought not, therefore, to be restrained in this Commonwealth.”

No one but a traitor, a bigot, or an idiot could pretend that, under this Article, a man can be punished for anything he may print, or put in the mail, whatever its moral “tendency” may be, till it is proved that he has actually corrupted somebody’s morals with it, or provoked a breach of the peace by obtruding it upon somebody against his will. To make the author punishable for the immoral “tendency” of what he writes, the printer for what he prints, or the bookseller for what he sells, on the opinion of a board of censors termed a jury, is to restrain the liberty of the press, if there is any possible mode of doing it.

Such a law under such an interpretation is a vastly greater terror to the innocent than the guilty. There is hardly a book in the English or any other language touching the vast and interesting subjects of love and marriage, from Solomon’s Song to *Cupid’s Yokes* which a prudent man will dare to put in the mail or even have in his library. We must give up all English and French novels and plays, and even the Holy Scriptures.

No person, not a vagabond or brute, be he infidel or Christian, free lover or bound lover, opposes the punishment

*by the proper authority*, of using indecent literature, or any literature, for the manifest purpose of personal affront or criminal seduction.

The question precipitated upon us by this trial is not whether obscenity shall be punished by the proper authority of State and common law, which are and always have been absolutely sufficient, and against the just execution of which it is a dastardly calumny to say the National Liberal League or any member of it is or ever was opposed; nor is it, whether we are willing to have the United States mail made a trap to catch innocent victims for long imprisonment, but whether *we are willing to have a CENSORSHIP of the PRESS established*.

We were beginning to think that the Christian Church, or at least the Protestant part of it, had got tired of trying to restrain the liberty of the press; but it seems not. It has taken up the business of Laud and the Star Chamber, in the shape of a "Society for the Suppression of Vice," Mr. Anthony Decoy Comstock filling the place of Dr. Peter Heylin, the "lying Peter" of two hundred and fifty years ago. If history repeats itself, and this is the beginning of the repetition, this is not a trifling matter.

When the first Christians began to write books which displeased the heathen, the heathen crucified the authors and burnt the books. This seemed very unreasonable to the Christians, as indeed it was. But no sooner did Christianity get into power than Constantine condemned, not only the works of the heathen but of all unorthodox Christian writers, thus adopting the heathen logic, which has prevailed in the Church till the present day, and is now cropping out afresh in a postal statute, foisted into our federal laws contrary to the Constitution.

The chief business of all the ecclesiastical councils, from that time to this, has been to decide what people should and should not write, read and hear. How could they otherwise keep the consciences of all other people?

It is one of the richest amusements of the bibliographer of the present day, to hunt up and read the works that were catalogued by the censor priests in the Index of prohibited books. One of the ablest of them says that if you wish to select a valuable library in Spain, you may find all the books worth having in that Index,—such works as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* having been put there, lest it should corrupt the morals of the Spanish merchants. There is not a



country in Europe in which the conscience-keepers of the race, while wallowing in all sorts of immorality themselves, have not been raging with chains, fire and faggot against heretical and immoral books.

John Milton, in his *Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, says of the Censorship of the Press established by the Council of Lateran in 1515: "To fill up the measure of encroachment, their last invention was to ordain that no book should be printed, as if St. Peter had bequeathed them the keys of the press also, as well as of Paradise, unless it were approved and licensed under the hands of two or three glutinous friars.

Till then, books were ever as freely admitted into the world as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifled than the issue of the womb; no envious Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual offspring." Little did John Milton dream that in a little more than two centuries, in the very country to which his brother Puritans had fled from the insane bigotry and tyranny of Laud, a plan would be invented by which this very bantling of his, for this very passage, would be excluded from the mails, and himself, if living, thrown into Dedham jail! No. He certainly did not dream it, or he would not have dared to write what he did about our then innocent mother Eve, in the Paradise which she lost, much less what he wrote about marriage and divorce in his own day, out of his own woful experience.

The sublime Milton, who did not attend church himself, wrote of it in the same spirit with which Christ so often chastised the churchmen of his day: "Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves."

This is the very natural language of a great human heart pouring out its indignation against corrupt and selfish oppressors; its punishment by the laws of the said oppressors is both wicked and futile. The Society for the Suppression of Vice, with its respectable ecclesiastical backers, have only to go on with the persecution of such books to find this out. They are engaged in an old struggle which has always been a losing one for their side.

This doctrine of "tendency" is the most dangerous club ever wielded against the liberty of the press. It has been ruled out in trials for treason by the Constitution of the



United States, which makes treason to consist only in levying war. "Facts, not tendencies," are to be found in the trial. If treasonable tendencies are not punishable in political writings, much less can immoral tendencies be punishable in other literature, except in the opinion of persecuting religious fanatics.

The Marquis Beccaria, whose writings are treated with profound respect by the wisest lawyers, obviously regards all penal laws as bad which do not so distinctly define the crime as to be in no danger of punishing the innocent; for he says, "Judges in criminal cases have no right to interpret the penal laws, because they are not legislators; \* \* \* the judge's office is only to examine if a man have or have not committed an action contrary to the laws."

Peignot on *The Liberty of the Press*, p. 95, says: — "A wise liberty to write is the guarantee of the tranquillity and prosperity of the State, the safeguard of religion and morals, and the source of the splendor and glory of literature. It has never been granted to any being on earth, neither government, nor statesman, nor true philosopher, to trace positively and beyond dispute the true line of demarcation between liberty and license."

Surely the authors of the postal statute under which Mr. Bennett was convicted on the lying pretence that they wanted a law only to suppress that obscenity which every decent citizen detests, they procured a law not only in flat violation of the Constitution, which gives not one atom of power to Congress to look into the moral character or moral tendency of any matter committed to the mails, but into which it is utterly impossible to put a line of demarcation which shall distinguish between liberty and license. There is not, and cannot be, in it the slightest force whatever to protect the true liberty of the press from the malice of the judge or the bigotry of the jury, as is demonstrated in this very case. The sole and only purpose was to suppress the application of reason to religion and the conduct of life.

Here we have an innocent man and most exemplary citizen convicted of a crime for selling a pamphlet in which there is not a single obscene word, and which the Attorney-General of the United States agrees with us is not to be confounded "with those obscene publications the effect and object of which is to excite the imagination and inflame the passions."

From human bigotry, and especially from Christian bigotry, the foundation-stone of which is, "He that believeth

shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," there is no safety for any printing heretic so long as there is any law in the statute book which can be tortured into making unbelief immoral.

A vast majority of the people of the United States, if the matter could be brought home to their individual reason and conscience, would demand the total repeal of the postal law, as if by a whirlwind. Punishing infidel writers only brings their writings into vogue.

American liberty was not born to be crushed by liars, backed even by doctors of divinity. Any American citizen who loves his country and does not despair of the republic may say, and will say, in the words of that friend of America, the Earl of Chatham, "I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if that law is not finally repealed."

This is an age in which the victories of mind over matter, and the discovery of the conditions of virtuous and happy life, have left no excuse for the inhumanity of the upper classes of society towards the lower. A pretty age this, for the State to abet the reviving spirit of persecution in the fanatics of the Church, on the plea that the morals of the people are becoming worse by the spread of obscenity than they were when even the dictionaries were not free from it!

The churches are a sort of conglomeration of not very harmonious corporations which have guaranteed to them and guarded for them by the State, not only perfect liberty of teaching, preaching, and printing, without regard to the moral tendency of their doctrines, but an unlimited exemption of their corporate property from taxation, out of regard to their supposed good moral influence upon society. And what do we see in our greatest cities? Members of churches in good standing, exalted to the highest positions of fiduciary responsibility, who lie, steal, bribe, and commit perjury with perfect impunity as long as the trust funds hold out! And what do we hear? Uprising from the cellars and slums, amidst forests of steeples, the old, sad, sad cry of the thousands of little children to whom another Herod would be a mercy.

A pretty time this, when the inside of society, especially in the upper end of it, is full of "extortion and excess," to be "making clean the outside of the cup and platter," with a dish-cloth dirtier than the dishes!

This is not only a time for indignation, but a time for action,—calm, resolute, united, persistent, untiring ACTION.